

Barnett, Morris  
The serious family  
Original complete ed.

PR

4066

B34S4

1880



DICKS' STANDARD PLAYS.

# THE SERIOUS FAMILY.

BY MORRIS BARNETT



ORIGINAL COMPLETE EDITION.

\*\* THIS PLAY CAN BE PERFORMED WITHOUT RISK OF INFRINGING ANY RIGHTS.

LONDON: JOHN DICKS, 313, STRAND. ALL BOOKSELLERS.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

Now Ready, Portrait and 8 Illustrations, crown 8vo., 146 pages, Price 6d.,

THE DRAMATIC WORKS OF

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN

With a Biographical and Critical Sketch by Leigh Hunt.

Contents:—

- |  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| The Rivals                                     | The School for Scandal              |
| St. Patrick's Day; or, the Scheming Lieutenant | The Camp                            |
| The Duenna                                     | The Critic; or, a Tragedy Rehearsed |
| A Trip to Scarborough                          | Pizarro                             |

Can also be had separately, price One Penny each; post free, one halfpenny each extra.

London: JOHN DICKS, 313, Strand.

Now Ready, Price Sixpence; post-free, One Penny extra,

DICKS' STANDARD CHARADES

PRESENTATION.

FOR



BANDIT.

THE SNOW

JARGONELLI

A MARRIAGE

THE LOST P

TWENTY AN

ALL'S FAIR

A WOMAN WILL BE A WOMAN.

STAIN'S GHOST.

K.

157 B.

L(E)S.

N.

LOCKSMITH.

PORTMANTEA

THE ABOVE CHARADES AND COMEDIES CAN BE PERFORMED WITHOUT FEAR OF INFRINGING ANY RIGHTS.

London: JOHN DICKS, 313, Strand. All Booksellers.

# THE SERIOUS FAMILY.

A COMEDY, IN THREE ACTS.

BY MORRIS BARNETT.

*First Performed at the Haymarket Theatre, October 30, 1849.*



## Dramatis Personæ,

[See page 3.]

CHARLES TORRENS	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Mr. Webster.
WILLIAM MURPHY MAGUIRE	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Mr. J. Wallack.
JOHN VINCENT	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Mr. H. Vandenhoff.
MIRIAM SLEEK	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Mr. Buckstone.
WALTER IVERS	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Mr. Coe.
MARY SOWERBY CREAMLY	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Mrs. W. Clifford.
MRS. CHARLES TORRENS	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Miss Reynolds.
MRS. MA TORRENS	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Mrs. L. S. Buckingham.
MRS. JOHN ORMSBY DELMAINE	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Mrs. Fitzwilliam.
MRS. ANNE HAM	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Mrs. Caulfield.

Servants, Guests, Ladies.

TIME OF REPRESENTATION.—Two Hours and Fifteen Minutes.

No. 1,007. Dicks' Standard Plays.



## COSTUME.

---

MR. CHARLES TORRENS.—*First dress*: Black frock coat; black waistcoat; gray trousers. *Second dress*: Black dress coat; black trousers; white waistcoat; dress hat.

CAPTAIN MURPHY MAGUIRE.—*First dress*: Blue paletot; waistcoat and trousers. *Second dress*: Blue dress coat; waistcoat; and trousers. *Third dress*: Black dress coat and velvet waistcoat.

FRANK VINCENT.—*First dress*: Top-coat. *Second dress*: Dress suit.

MR. AMINADAB SLEEK.—Gray suit.

DANVERS.—Drab livery.

SERVANTS.—Drab livery.

GUESTS.—Dress suits.

LADY SOWERBY CREAMLY.—Slate silk dress; white cap and apron.

MRS. CHARLES TORRENS.—*First dress*: Gray silk dress. *Second dress*: White ball dress.

MISS EMMA TORRENS.—*First dress*: White muslin; with blue silk jacket. *Second dress*: Scarlet gauze ball dress.

MRS. ORMSBY DELMAINE.—*First dress*: Puce velvet dress. *Second dress*: Blue gauze ball dress.

GRAHAM. Green de laine dress; with pink apron.

LADIES.—Ball dresses; various.

---

## STAGE DIRECTIONS.

EXITS AND ENTRANCES.—R. means *Right*; L. *Left*; D. F. *Door in Flat*; R. D. *Right Door*; L. D. *Left Door*; S. E. *Second Entrance*; U. E. *Upper Entrance*; M. D. *Middle Door*; L. U. E. *Left Upper Entrance*; R. U. E. *Right Upper Entrance*; L. S. E. *Left Second Entrance*; P. S. *Prompt Side*; O. P. *Opposite Prompt*.

RELATIVE POSITIONS.—R. means *Right*; L. *Left*; C. *Centre*; R. C. *Right of Centre*; L. C. *Left of Centre*.

R.

RC.

C.

LC.

L.

\*.\* The Reader is supposed to be on the Stage, facing the Audience.

# THE SERIOUS FAMILY. 140

## ACT I.

SCENE.—A Drawing-room, soberly but substantially furnished.

At the rising of the curtain are discovered, seated at the table, R., covered with papers, LADY CREAMLY, MR. AMINADAB SLEEK, and MRS. CHARLES TORRENS. TORRENS, at table, L., as secretary, with pen in hand, doing. All are dressed in the most formal manner.

Sleek. (Reading in a Puritanical tone.) "We appeal to the disciples of true benevolence, and doers of good deeds, without distinction of politics or party—we call on all to come forward in the great work of enlarged and universal civilization." Hem! What think you of that, my lady?

Lady C. These words give comfort to every fainting and world-worn spirit, good Mr. Aminadab Sleek. (To Charles.) Write them down, my son. I protest he's asleep!—The spirit is willing but—

Sleek. But it sleepeth.

Mrs. T. (Crosses to Charles.) Charles, what a shame to fall asleep at so sublime a passage!

Chas. Oh, dear, where was I? (Reading.) "Like a lion it roaroth for its prey." "Benevolence and Charity." I have it. Forgive me, Lady Creamly and pious Mr. Aminadab Sleek. The fact is, between labour and watching, I lose a little of my rest, and Nature will have her revenge. That will do for to-day, I hope.

(All rise and come forward.)

Sleek. We are all then decided on making this appeal. We will establish a deputation in every parish—the petitions are in course of preparation—and I trust I may be permitted to accompany your ladyship and my philanthropic young friend in their charitable round.

Lady C. Too happy, Mr. Aminadab Sleek, to be guided by your voice and encouraged by your presence; but we hope that another and a tenderer tie will soon bring our families more closely together. Your nephew, that pattern of special grace, that paragon of model propriety, will, before long, obtain the hand—

Sleek. (Aside.) And the fortune!

Lady C. And the worldly goods of our dear Emma, the sister of our son-in-law.

Mrs. T. And a happy girl Emma will be. What a gracious dispensation has been worked in her behalf! Had we never met Mr. Aminadab Sleek, we should still be on the brink of the precipice of vanity; but the great work will be now perfected by the union of his nephew and Emma.

Lady C. Yes, beloved child; but let us not forget the important duty we have in hand. At twelve to-morrow morning we meet; our son-in-law will read to our assembled friends his address on benevolence, and then—

Chas. (Aside.) At twelve to-morrow morning. I had rather have had a day's shooting.

Enter EMMA, L. D., fashionably dressed.

Emma. (Crosses to Mrs. Torrens.) Oh, dear—oh, dear! Such capital news! He's come—he's come!

Lady C. Well, Miss Hoyden? Mrs. T. How can you be so giddy, Emma? Don't you see Mr. Aminadab Sleek, the mirror of piety—the champion of—hem!—the champion of— Hem!

(Emma salutes profoundly Mr. Sleek and Lady Creamly, who regard her disdainfully.)

Chas. (Aside.) Very pleasant all this; but I'll have a day's shooting, in spite of them.

Emma. Oh, Charles, he's come—your old friend—the friend of all the family! I caught a glimpse as he gave his card to Danvers, and I ran to tell you.

Enter Servant, he presents card to Charles, Mrs. Torrens takes it and hands it to Lady Creamly, who passes it to Sleek, who reads aloud.

Sleek. "Captain Murphy Maguire."

Chas. Maguire! My old friend Murphy—the best fellow in the world! Show him in, Danvers.

Lady C. A little moderation, son-in-law. Shall we, Mr. Sleek? Shall we, my child?

Sleek. A captain, and an Irishman! Um!

Lady C. A libertine!

Chas. (Aside.) A fellow after my own heart. (Aloud.) He might have been so formerly, but he is now changed. He belongs to a serious regiment. Ah! Oh!

(Lady Creamly, Mr. Sleek, and Mrs. Torrens bow gravely to each other.)

Lady C. Admit him.

Emma. How happy I am! I was a child when he saw me last, and I am now—

Lady C. Still a child. You will please retire to your chamber. No remonstrance.

Mrs. T. Go, child!

[Exit Emma, L. D., impatiently.]

Lady C. Received your visitor, Mr. Charles Torrens. (Charles comes forward, the others retire to tables, and appear much occupied with the various papers.)

Enter CAPTAIN MAGUIRE, c.

Capt. M. My dear Charles!

Chas. (In his natural manner.) What, Maguire—my old friend! (Shakes his hand violently; the party at the back look on with contemptuous astonishment.) Why, it's an age since I have seen you!

Capt. M. Yes, my dear boy, an absence of four years—Calcutta—West Indies—capital, station—glorious cigars and whiskey toddy. A little

tanned, eh? The steam of the gold has spoiled the natural brilliancy of my complexion.

Chas. Still the same—the same gay, rollicking, sound-hearted old fellow! Not married?

Capt. M. What me bound in the rosy bonds of that young robber, paddy Cupid? No, thank heaven!

Lady C. } Oh! (Groaning.)  
Mrs. T. }  
Sleek.

Chas. (Aside to him.) Softly, softly, old fellow. (Resumes his starched manner.) Permit me, Captain Murphy Maguire, to present you to Mrs. Charles Torrens, the partner of my present joys and future hopes. Eve, my dearest, allow me to present you to my oldest and best friend, Captain Murphy Maguire.

(Mrs. Torrens bows coldly but graciously.)  
Capt. M. I am delighted to make your acquaintance. (Crosses to her.) Charley and I are old friends. I rejoice at his good fortune! Charley, your wife's a first-rate angel. You'll excuse my freedom, madam, but what I think I say.

(Mrs. Torrens smiles and appears pleased; Sleek and Lady Creamly exchange doleful glances.)

Lady C. (Aside to Mrs. Torrens.) Don't answer him.

Sleek. (Aside.) A profligate!  
Capt. M. You're a lucky villain, Charley! What eyes—like a general illumination! What a shape! She's a model for a Venus!

All. Oh! (Groaning.)  
Chas. (Pulling him by the coat.) What the devil are you about?

Capt. M. (Looking with astonishment at him, and the jormal faces at the table.) What's the damage, and what have I done, and what have I said? You're wife is a beauty, and what I think I say! Why, you're not jealous, Charley? But where is Emma—my little Emma—the little rosebud?

Lady C. (Rising and bowing stiffly.) Miss Torrens, sir, is with her governess in the library.

Capt. M. Upon my honour, I meant no offence. I should have said Miss Torrens; but Charles and I are such old friends, and have seen such roaring times together, and—

Chas. (Interrupting.) My mother-in-law, Captain Murphy Maguire, Lady Sowerby Creamly.

Capt. M. (Bows very low.) I have the honour. (Crosses to her.) Very proud, I assure you. Charley's friends are mine.

Lady C. (With cold disdain.) You overwhelm me with the weight of the honour.

(Takes a book and reads.)  
Capt. M. (Aside to Charles.) The old dromedary in the pepper and salt is the father-in-law, I suppose. A trifle the worse for wear, but the heart is in the right place, I hope.

Chas. (Aside.) Pull up, old fellow! That's Mr. Aminadab Sleek, perpetual member of the borough of Solemnolly, and a great gun at Exeter Hall. (Aloud.) Captain Maguire, this is my excellent and most worthy ally, Mr. Aminadab Sleek, the especial friend of this family—the friend of the poor—the friend of all the world—(aside)—who gives good dinners, and have rich daughters to marry. (Crosses to L. Sleek bows slowly. Maguire runs up, and shakes him heartily by the hand.)

Capt. M. Delighted to make your acquaintance, sir. Oh, we shall be the best friends in the world! Only wait till I get you snugly seated before a

steaming jug of whisky-punch, and behind a full-flavoured havannah, and I'll be bound to take the wrinkles out of you.

Sleek. } Oh!  
Lady C. } (Groaning.)  
Mrs. T. }

Capt. M. Well, Charley, here I am, and here I mean to stay. (Sits L. of table.) I have a week's leave of absence, and so I thought I'd run up and see my old friends. I say, old fellow, you are well tiled in. I suppose you've a room where we can sling a hammock. With your leave, ladies, what I think I say.

Lady C. Sir!  
Mrs. T. Certainly. (All rise and come forward.)

Chas. (Embarrassed.) Oh, certainly!

Capt. M. I couldn't think for a moment, Charley, of stopping at an hotel, while you have a house in town. We have so much to say—to talk over old times, you sinner! Oh, don't be alarmed, ladies! A reformed rake always makes a good husband, and Charley, certainly, was the devil's own boy!

Mrs. T. My husband a rake!  
Lady C. Impossible!

Capt. M. I have brought you, Charley, a case of regalias that would make the Queen of Spain's mouth water. I know you of old, you robber—a dozen a-day!

Chas. Be quiet, will you?  
(Pulling him by the coat.)

Capt. M. What's the matter? (Lady Creamly, Mrs. Torrens, and Sleek exchange looks.) One can have a bit of luncheon, I suppose, a sandwich, or the wing of a cold fowl. The air of the September morning has made me as hungry as an ostrich.

Chas. Certainly. Eve, my dear, luncheon for Captain Maguire.

Capt. M. Have you any of the old madeira left? Eh, Charley, boy, we remember the time, how we used to punish that same madeira; but we're all changed. I am getting old, and you are married. The madeira is older, too, and that's a compensation.

Lady C. (Crosses to R. C.) Captain Murphy Maguire, I am loth to interfere, but my son-in-law neither smokes nor drinks madeira. A cigar is his aversion, and he has taken the pledge.

Capt. M. The what?  
Sleek. Yes; he has taken the pledge, and got a medal.

Chas. (Aside.) I have, the deuce take it; but I'll have my revenge. A day's shooting—a first-rate regalia—and a bottle of the old sort. (Aloud.) Yes, Captain Maguire, you will find me a changed man. I learned from Mr. Sleek that all pleasure is vanity, and all drinking vexation of spirit; and from Lady Creamly, that with sorrow and sighs the world passes pleasantly enough. (More gaily, and crosses to C.) Still we must get our luncheon Let me go.

Lady C. Let me remind you, Mr. Torrens, that ten copies more of the circular must be written out; and that you have promised to assist Mr. Aminadab Sleek. (To Captain.) I will take care sir, that you are comfortably served. (To Mrs. Torrens.) Come, my child!

Capt. M. Really, I give you too much trouble I am quite in despair.

(Lady Creamly salutes him most deeply. He bows; Charles groans; and Mrs. Torrens smiles for an instant, and then assumes her formal manner.)



Lady C. Come, my child!

[Exit Lady Creamly, with Mrs. Torrens, c.]

Chas. (Forgetting that Sleek remains.) They're off and now for it!

Capt. M. (L.) Charley, your wife is elegant. She's a darling creature; but I don't know how it is. Are you happy in your home?—there seems every now and again a sort of dingy cloud coming over the natural sunshine of your nature. Your wife's charming! Ah, now I recollect! Sir Charles Creamly was your guardian; you married his daughter, and thus settled his accounts.

Chas. The truth is, I married because my guardian so arranged it. I lead a life— But never mind. I am in for it. The fact is, my wife is a little too grave. She belongs to what is styled a serious family.

Capt. M. A fellow like you marrying into a serious family! Ha, ha! That's beautiful. (Sleek groans.) Oh, murmur, what have I said?

Chas. (Changing his tone.) Yes, Captain Maguire, we are all serious here.

Capt. M. But you may be too serious. A charming creature, like Mrs. Torrens, should be seen driving a pony-chaise in the Parks, or dispensing the rays of her beauty from the opera-box. And at your time of life, Charley, this gravity is infernal folly. Get out of it—cast it from you! Would you grow old before your time? Bad luck to your sober-sided, muddy-minded people! I hate your Cantwells! Am I not right, Mr. Sleek?

(Crosses and slaps Sleek on the back.)

Chas. (Aside.) His lines have fallen in pleasant places. Cantwell, indeed!

Capt. M. He mustn't lock up his wife. The young creature will mope herself to death. You are of my opinion, ar'n't you, sir?

Sleek. (Down, c.) Um! They say that bachelors' wives and maidens' children are always well managed. Pray, are you entered into the moral estate of wedlock, Captain?

Capt. M. No.

(Changing his manner, as though annoyed by an unpleasant reminiscence.)

Sleek. Nor engaged?

Capt. M. No; I've been infernally jilted by the greatest rascal of a coquette that ever was sent into the world to plague the heart out of a man—a woman I loved better a thousand times than my own life.

Sleek. Um! You have been jilted?

Capt. M. You're right there, Mr. Sleek; but, as I couldn't call her out, I took my revenge, and went to sea.

Sleek. Um! And the sea has cooled your passion?

Capt. M. To be sure it did, Sleek; and now I hate her more intolerably than ever I loved her.

Sleek. Um! No danger of a relapse?

Capt. M. Not a bit of it, Sleek; for to save myself from the one, I make love to twenty. And I've come to London to take a round of dissipation; and, for that reason, I stay with my old friend—for he knows every spot on the cards. Eh, Charley, my boy? We'll have a roaring time of it.

Enter SERVANT, c.

Serv. Luncheon, sir.

Capt. M. That's your sort. Faith, I'm as hungry as a hunter! Come, Charley.

He is leaving the room, followed by Charles, but the latter is stopped by LADY CREAMLY and MRS. TORRENS, who enter at the same time.

Lady C. One moment, Mr. Torrens. (Captain follows the Servant.) You will take these letters to the directors, and return in half an hour, as we want to arrange a visiting for this evening?

Chas. Certainly, Lady Creamly. (Aside.) I'll have a day's shooting.

[Exit, c.]

Sleek. (Crosses to c.) At last we have a moment to ourselves, dear ladies. Unpleasant consequences will arise from this unexpected visit.

Lady C. What an acquaintance for my son-in-law!

Sleek. A perfect Absalom!

Mrs. T. Well-looking and gentleman like, but evidently too much attached to the wicked world.

Lady C. A libertine!

Sleek. That's not all, dear ladies. Let him be profligate as he pleases, and we shall strive for his conversion; but he is in love with a coquette, by whom he has been deceived.

Mrs. T. Poor young man!

Sleek. And, obliged to visit the metropolis, he is determined to console himself for an unfortunate passion by going through an extended circle of dissipation. In short, he is about to visit his old haunts of vice and sorrow, and for this he seeks in this virtuous mansion, he says, the former companion of his sinful pleasures. It suffices to turn my blood to verjuice.

Lady C. The wretched person!

Mrs. T. And my Charles the former companion of his pleasures!—a lamb!—an angel of goodness!—a man who never leaves his own home, except for a day's shooting! Then, certainly, he is not to be controlled. Once the coveys are out, my husband will not stay at home.

Sleek. He always is after the coveys! But what is to be done?

Lady C. (To Mrs. Torrens.) Child, all this is your fault—yes, your fault—your want of firmness and decision. (Nods to Sleek.)

Sleek. Yes, certainly, honoured madam, it is all your fault.

Lady C. When the abominable man said he was come to take up his quarters here, you should have recollected that there was not one room unoccupied.

Mrs. T. What, a friend of my husband's—a gentleman that Charles is always speaking of, and whom he so well received!

Lady C. No matter; the presence of a libertine will compromise all our reputations. Your rooms should have been all occupied.

Mrs. T. But, dear mamma, the truth—

(Crosses to c.)

Lady C. Ah, my dear, the truth, when it is useful to be told!

Sleek. My honoured friend is right; all depends on circumstances. We make a great distinction between saying what is not, and not saying what is, according to the object and intentions. This is high morality.

Lady C. And in this case our object is to rescue my son-in-law from the society of a person—

Sleek. Whose example and perfidious counsels would open an abyss before him.

Mrs. T. Oh, Lady Creamly!

Lady C. Bad example is dangerous.

Sleek. And the human heart so weak, my

honoured friend. You hear that it is the intention of this person again to seek the acquaintance of those friends from whose pernicious example you have withdrawn the husband of your bosom. He is so weak he would again be led astray, and—

*Lady C.* And then—

*Mrs. T.* My poor Charles! But I certainly shall not permit a stranger, a person entirely unknown, to come and lead him away from his good habits. But what is to be done? What plan can be devised? Aid me with your counsels.

*Sleek.* It is almost too late.

*Lady C.* The only plan I can suggest is to request this person politely to go—politely—about his business.

*Sleek.* Politely.

*Mrs. T.* I understand you! But how is that to be done? I could not dare attempt it. If you, my dear mamma, would take it upon yourself.

*Lady C.* Impossible, my child; it would look like dictating to you in your own house.

*Sleek.* That is very true.

*Mrs. T.* Well, then, Mr. Sleek, you will do it. It will add to the obligations we already owe you.

*Sleek.* Excuse me. These Hibernians are of such explosive nature, that it is quite possible he might forget my size and the respect due to it. Mr. Torrens himself would be the proper person.

*Lady C.* No, that cannot be; they must not meet; and to make the matter more sure, we will send Charles for a few days in the country.

*Mrs. T.* He goes too often already, mamma.

*Lady C.* That is the wisest plan; and in the meantime, we will adopt a coolness of manner towards this intruder, which will make him more circumspect, and give him no inclination to remain in a house where the principles of those in it are so different from his own.

*(Captain Maguire speaks without.)*

*Sleek.* Ha! Here he comes, the sinful man of sanguinary war!

*Enter CAPTAIN MAGUIRE, c., down R.*

*Capt. M.* Upon my faith, your substantial hospitality lays me under infinite obligation. Better port I never tasted.

*Lady C.* *(Crosses to Maguire, austere.)* Captain Murphy Maguire, I have important orders to give and am on the point of—

*[Exit, bowing very stiffly, c.]*

*Capt. M.* *(Looks astonished, but bows profoundly in return. He then turns to Mrs. Torrens.)* Then to you, my dear madam, the wife of my old friend—

*Mrs. T.* *(Following Lady Creamly, and bowing in the most precise manner.)* You must also excuse me, Captain Maguire. I shall be too late for the meeting.

*[Exit.]*

*Capt. M.* *(Looks more amazed, but bows to the ground, then turning to Sleek, goes up to him and offers his hand in a cordial style.)* Well, Mr. Sleek, the ladies appear to be monstrously engaged. The pleasure of entertaining me is reserved for you.

*Sleek.* *(R., taking out his watch.)* Excuse me, sir, I have not an instant to lose. The meeting cannot commence without me.

*[Looks angrily at Maguire, and exit, c.]*

*Capt. M.* What the devil does all this mean? Oh, if that's the case, there's not a word to be said. Does it mean the cold shoulder? Is it to cut me they mean? But I'll not believe it—it's

impossible, and what's impossible is not in nature. Oh, Charles Torrens's wife and family wouldn't be capable of behaving so shabbily to his old friend! Wait awhile, Captain Murphy Maguire, and syllogize a bit. This is a serious family. There's the old lady, as stiff as a ramrod, and as gray as an overall; Mr. Sleek, a shuffling, canting old robber; and the pretty Mrs. Torrens, with her sweet face, charming air, and saint-like look; and then Charley himself, instead of the free-hearted, devil-may-care fellow I knew him at college, has become as solemn and demure as a volume of "The Pilgrim's Progress." There is a mystery in all this, which must be unravelled!

*EMMA peeps in.*

*Emma.* He is quite alone. *(Runs in.)* Ah, dear Captain Maguire!

*Capt. M.* *(Not recognising her.)* On my faith, I am greatly flattered by your recollection, but really—

*Emma.* What, don't you know your old playmate, Emma?

*Capt. M.* Is it possible? You, the darling little Emmy that I left a child, and who now, I must say, is a very charming young lady.

*Emma.* *(Pouting.)* No, I am not a charming, young lady; I am a very disagreeable, unhappy creature. I am sure I am very ugly.

*Capt. M.* Oh, miss, don't be profane!

*Emma.* They say crying makes one ugly, and I weep all day long.

*Capt. M.* Come, dear Emmy, you must confide all your little sorrows to your old friend.

*Emma.* Yes; but if they heard me—if Lady Creamly knew that I was here?

*Capt. M.* Look up, and you'll never be cast down. Don't tremble; am I not at your side—your old friend? And besides, there's your brother Charles. Come now, tell me what's the matter, and what is going on in this house. *(They sit.)*

*Emma.* There is nothing going on, and that makes it so miserable. Day follows day, and are all the same; no pleasure, no balls, no horticultural fêtes, no opera—always sermons and scoldings. I am moped to death.

*Capt. M.* Oh, I understand, Lady Creamly is a strict disciplinarian?

*Emma.* Oh, horribly severe!

*Capt. M.* But Mrs. Torrens, your sister-in-law, who is young, and appears mighty amiable?

*Emma.* Oh, I am sure, I do not say she would not be so, if my brother Charles were to act differently; but all he thinks of is to accompany Lady Creamly on her serious visits, or read some charitable circular to his wife!

*Capt. M.* Oh, oh! I see where the wind blows. Charles was never famous for strength of mind, or firmness of purpose, and he gives way rather than have domestic dissensions.

*Emma.* But the best of it is, whenever he is what they call backsliding, they send him out of town, and he seems delighted; and then I am left all alone.

*Capt. M.* But that won't last long. You are sure to marry.

*Emma.* No, that's the worst of it, they won't let me marry—that is to say to the man of my choice—your old acquaintance, Frank Vincent; but they want to trump up a marriage with a nephew of Mr. Aminadab Sleek.

*Capt. M.* What, a nephew of Mr. Aminadab Sleek? *(They rise.)*



Emma. Whom I detest from the bottom of my heart.

Capt. M. Sure, your brother will never suffer that?

Emma. Oh, my brother counts for nothing in this house! The fact is, they have forbidden Frank to come here, and I am sure he is dying, if not dead. (Sobbing.)

Capt. M. Nonsense, darling, you are both of you too young for dying. Cheer up, and let us see if we cannot restore your brother to common sense, and have you married to Frank Vincent, in spite of Lady Creamly and that old pepper-and-salt dromedary, Sleek.

Enter CHARLES, gaily, down c.

Chas. Thank the fates, it's over! I have been bored to death with their hypocrisy and cant. And now, old fellow, what's to be done, and where are we to begin?

Capt. M. Before we commence our campaigning frolic, I have something serious to say to you. My old-young friend, Emma, has been letting a little daylight into the family secrets; and I find that you are not actually the master of your own house—and that you are peaceably led by the nose by your mother-in-law and that dromedary, old Sleek, without a snort or a kick.

Chas. It's all very well talking. Anything for a quiet life. I did make a determined stand at first, but they attacked me in front and on both flanks, and I was glad ultimately to yield at discretion. The only consolation I have is, that I get away every now and then, and have a day's shooting.

Capt. M. That's all very well as far as yourself is concerned; but what becomes of our sweet friend Emma, here, whom you allow to be sacrificed to the canting son of a thief of that greedy old rhinoceros, Aminadab Sleek, because you haven't the decent courage to say no?

Chas. Sacrificed! Why, it's an excellent match; and this is the first time I have heard that Emma dislikes him.

Emma. I hate and abominate him, and nothing but force shall ever make me consent to the match.

Capt. M. That's right, my little Cæsar, stick to your colours like a little hero, as you are. (To Charles.) And over and above, there is a large lump of an attachment to another, and that other is none other than Frank Vincent—ah, now don't blush, Emma!—and a smart boy is that same Frank Vincent. Come, Charley, you must be a man, and stand up for your sister's rights.

Chas. I have no objection, I am Emma's guardian, and if she says no, her inclination shall not be constrained. But I have had a hard card to play; and if you knew what an obdurate person Lady Creamly is, and what influence she has on my wife— Why, the very sound of her voice frightens me! (A voice is heard without.) Damn it, here she is. Stick by me, old fellow;

Emma. Oh, dear, I must not be caught here! I leave my cause in your hands!

[Runs off, L. The voice of Mrs.

Torrens heard without.

Chas. No, heaven be praised; it's my wife! And now, Maguire, I am a man again. Leave me with Eve, and I'll speak to her more roundly than I have ever done. She has an excellent heart, and is attached to me, as well as to Emma.

Capt. M. Stick to that, Charley, boy! A man

should be master of his own house, and a good wife have no other wish than his. Don't spare powder, and the victory's your own.

Chas. Yes, that's very true, but if my mother-in-law—

Capt. M. Don't be chicken-hearted. And in order to leave you a fair field, I'll retreat.

Enter MRS. TORRENS, down, r. c. To her.

At your feet, madam. [Bows, and exits, c.

Chas. (Aside.) He's right—very right! Why should I be afraid? After all, 'tis but a woman, and that woman my wife. And if it be true that Emma detests old Sleek's nephew, why should she be forced to marry him?

Mrs. T. (Aside.) Since my mother assures me me that the presence of Captain Maguire is dangerous to my husband, he certainly shall leave.

Chas. My dear Eve!

Mrs. T. My dear Charles!

Chas. I am overjoyed to see you, for I wish to speak to you on a very important affair.

Mrs. T. That's just what I have to do with you; and I fear what I have to say will annoy you a little.

Chas. That's just the case with which I have to say; but when it concerns the happiness of—

Mrs. T. You are perfectly right.

Chas. And then we understand each other so well.

Mrs. T. (Aside.) I think I may safely speak.

(Places chairs.)

Chas. (Preparing to speak.) Eve, dear—

Mrs. T. My dear Charles, you know how necessary it is in married life for people to understand each other.

Chas. Certainly.

Mrs. T. And many things that appear strange at first, are perfectly clear when you come to explain them.

Chas. Just what I was but now remarking to Captain Maguire.

Mrs. T. Maguire, my love? Why, he can have no idea—

Chas. Indeed he has; and it was even he who suggested me to speak to you.

Mrs. T. That is very strange, for really we were at a loss how to break the subject to him.

Chas. Oh, as to that, he is perfectly well informed; and I really do not think, after what has passed, that we can give Emma to Mr. Sleek's nephew! Do you, my love?

Mrs. T. That's not our affair, Charles. Mamma will arrange all that with Mr. Sleek. But I do hope that you will make Captain Maguire understand that—

Chas. Oh, as to Maguire, he's the best fellow in the world, he will refuse me nothing!

Mrs. T. In that case our difficulties are all over. You have merely to tell him that instead of taking up his quarters here, he will go to Long's, where I have no doubt he will be quite at his ease.

Chas. What? Turn Maguire out of doors! An old friend— (Rises.)

Mrs. T. A libertine.

Chas. A capital fellow.

Mrs. T. But my reputation, Mr. Torrens! Is it fit that a character like Captain Maguire should live under the same roof with your wife?

Chas. Oh, lord—oh, lord! (Puts chairs back.)

Mrs. T. Fie, Charles! And, besides, the thing is

impossible. You are going out of town—it is settled you are to have several days' shooting.

*Chas. (Eagerly.)* Am I going out of town? And when has this been settled, my dear?

*Mrs. T. Why, my mother and Mr. Sleek have talked the thing over, and they find that the easiest way of arranging the matter.*

*Chas. Oh, that's quite a different affair! Now I begin to understand you. If I am to go into the country—*

*Mrs. T. Why, you seem quite excited! One would almost say you were glad to leave us.*

*Chas. Oh, no, my love; I am only thinking how admirably my absence will get you out of this dilemma!*

*Mrs. T. Then you will go to-day?*

*Chas. To-day! (Aside.) Capital!*

*Mrs. T. Yes, let it be to-day.*

*Chas. The soon the better.*

*Mrs. T. The better?*

*Chas. Why, yes, dear—yes; mamma can say to Maguire what I could not, and my absence would be an excuse for every thing.*

*Enter LADY CREAMLY and SLEEK, c.*

*Mrs. T. I am glad you are come, dear mamma; you have no idea how reasonable Charles is.*

*Sleek. (Aside.) Reasonable with a T.*

*Lady C. It is better late than never; and I cannot understand why Mr. Torrens should ever hesitate, even for a moment, to follow the counsel and advice of those who have only in view his advancement—*

*Sleek. In moral philosophy and utilitarianism.*

*Chas. (Aside.) Another lecture! (Aloud.) Why, Lady Creamly, as you say, you and Eve mean nothing but my good; and though it is a little hard that I should be separated from an old friend, still, as you and utility desire it, I consent.*

*Lady C. You are wise, in this instance; for it is evident that a young man without the principles of utilitarianism—without morality—*

*Sleek. Addicted to the gilded and evanescent follies of modern go-a-headism.*

*Lady C. Could not remain under our roof without giving public scandal.*

*Sleek. Public scandal!*

*Mrs. T. Oh, mamma! Charles feels all that now sensibly.*

*Chas. But how can I send him away? I can never summon up nerve to do so.*

*Lady C. That shall be my pleasing duty.*

*(Captain is heard giving orders.)*

*Sleek. Here the champagne anti-peace man comes. (Aside.) I know the effervescent qualities.*

*Captain Maguire. (Without.) That will do, Danvers—take care of my luggage.*

*Enter CAPTAIN MAGUIRE.*

Here I am, ladies. I never travel with much luggage; any article is enough for me—more than one is inconvenient, and weighs heavily upon the mind.

*(They all bow very gravely, and Charles speaks aside to him.)*

*Chas. Don't be offended, old fellow, at whatever occurs. You shall have a note in half an hour at Long's. (To Ladies.) I fly to obey your orders! Poor Maguire! (Aside.) Vive la liberté, and a good day's shooting.*

*[Exit, c.]*

*Lady C. (Stiffly.) Captain Murphy Maguire, Mr.*

and Mrs. Charles Torrens and I are very much annoyed that a little difficulty has occurred which will prevent us the pleasure of receiving you here.

*Mrs. T. We are most reluctantly obliged to say—*

*Sleek. Yes, we are most reluctantly obliged to say—*

*Lady C. That there is not a single room disengaged; the only spare one was yesterday promised to a friend of Mr. Aminadab Sleek.*

*Sleek. Mr. Tarquinius Jumbo, a serious coloured gentleman from the interior of Africa.*

*Capt. M. In that case, then, my dear lady, as there is no room—*

*Lady C. } Why, really—*

*Mrs. T. }*

*Capt. M. I presume you don't want my company; and, as I cannot but believe that black isn't white, the only plan left, ladies, under the existing circumstances of the case, is to make a retrograde march back with my luggage to Long's Hotel.*

*Lady C. We are quite in despair—*

*Sleek. In despair—*

*Lady C. At our seeming want of hospitality.*

*Capt. M. Don't breathe it, ladies—nor groan it, my little patron of Tarquinius Jumbo; among friends such trifling accidents must be taken in good part. For the present, I have the pleasure to wish you good day, but I'll call often, and remain a long while! Good day! Poor Charley!*

*[Exit.]*

*Lady C. Thank heaven, it's all over!*

*(Sinks into a seat, using smelling-bottle, and fanning herself with handkerchief.)*

END OF ACT I.

## ACT II.

SCENE.—A Drawing-room, splendidly furnished. Doors, R. and L.

*Enter MRS. ORMSBY DELMAINE and GRAHAM, L. D.*

*Mrs. D. Has any reply been sent from Mivart's, Graham?*

*Gra. No, ma'am; Jones has just returned, and says that Mr. FitzFoley has not been at Mivart's the last fortnight.*

*Mrs. D. How very odd! That creature is never to be found when he is wanted.*

*Gra. Don't be uneasy, ma'am; it's true he's never to be found at his hotel, but then at seven, he never fails to show his handsome face, when invited.*

*Mrs. D. Yes, Graham, he is very handsome, and exceedingly amiable, though at moments his wild merriment runs away with his discretion. I have often thought, since that abominable captain so ungallantly struck his colours, that Mr. FitzFoley might very well take his place in my affections.*

*Gra. Indeed, and why not, ma'am? A lady of your charming disposition, and large wealth, has a right to choose; and who better could you choose, than the young, handsome, well-dressed, white gloved, polish-booted Mr. FitzFoley? Law, ma'am!*

*(As she speaks, voices are heard, that of Charles Torrens predominating.)*

*Chas. (Outside.) Nonsense, that will never do—that will never do!*



*Serv. (Outside.)* But, sir, we are only ten at table.

*Chas. (Outside.)* Twelve, I say. Old Wilson, two dozen of claret, one of hock, and Moet's champagne à discretion.

*Gra.* There he is, ma'am; there's his pianoforte voice ordering, as usual, the best in the cellar.

*Mrs. D.* The monster! He has never once asked for me.

*Enter CHARLES TORRENS, R., dressed in the highest fashion.*

*Chas.* That Wilson is positively a Goth of the premier force! My dear Mrs. Ormsby Deimaine, only imagine, he wants to ice the champagne before drawing the corks, the heathen! Well, dearest widow, you look radiant. If I were a woman, I would poison you.

*Mrs. D. (Laughing.)* Ever the same super-abundant gaiety. I protest, if you do not get steady, I shall be obliged to close my doors.

*Chas.* My dear Mrs. Delmaine, not a word, or you will drive me to prussic acid, hair triggers, or Waterloo Bridge. Why, if the champagne were not properly iced, your character would be damaged for ever. And, moreover, my reputation is at stake to-day, for I have taken the liberty to invite a friend, knowing that any friend of mine will be well received by you.

*Mrs. D.* Is he young, handsome, and clever?

*Chas.* All three.

*Mrs. D.* Then he must be a very dangerous young man to introduce.

*Chas.* Never mind—one rival more. If I die, let me die of a surfeit.

*Mrs. D.* Where have you been concealed all this time?

*Chas.* In Belgium, in France, Vienna, Comorne, Moscow, and Egypt.

*Mrs. D.* I have sent twenty times to Mivart's, and you were never to be found.

*Chas.* No wonder; I was at Constantinople.

*Mrs. D.* No; no such thing! You were neither in Belgium, France, Vienna, Comorne, Moscow, Egypt, or Constantinople. You were nearer home than that; for only a few days since, to please some country friends, I went to hear the new lecturer in the city, on the subject of universal charity, practically considered; when, who should I see but the gay, fashionable, and all accomplished FitzFoley, listening as demurely as some old Barbones, and at the end of the lecture, giving his arm with the greatest propriety to an ancient dowager, who looked as if the charitable arguments that had entered her ears would find some difficulty in reaching either her heart or her pocket.

*Chas.* Impossible! An optical delusion!

*Mrs. D.* It was a fact, and no optical delusion or illusion.

*Chas.* Ah, now, by the bye, I do recollect! I had just left my banker's, and, curiously enough, passing by the place, an old lady fainted, when I chivalrously offered my arm, and—

*Mrs. D.* Pray don't attempt to excuse yourself. Indeed, I like you the better for the wish to be instructed in any act of true benevolence; and for my own part, thoughtless and volatile as you may think me, it is ever with a feeling of real pleasure that I contribute what I can afford to any deserving purpose or object of charity. And to prove it, I am now considering in what way I can best

assist the views of some estimable persons who have to-day favoured me with this circular.

*(Hand: him one of his circulars.)*

*Chas. (Aside.)* Whew! One of my own circulars! Extremes meet! *(To her.)* But, dear Mrs. Delmaine, at what time is dinner ordered.

*Enter GRAHAM, abruptly.*

*Gra.* Ma'am, Lady Pompous, Mrs. Culverin Grampus, and Admiral Bowsprit are in the drawing-room.

*Mrs. D.* Pray excuse me for a few minutes, I am sorry to run away from our agreeable tête-à-tête; but I must go and be amiable to our visitors as they expect it of me. Oh, what victims we are! How the real comforts of the heart are obliged to be sacrificed to the exigencies of the world! I shall expect you to join us without delay.

*[Exit Mrs. Delmaine.]*

*Chas. Graham,* I wonder your lady is not ashamed to have so handsome a maid.

*Gra.* Lord, sir, how you do talk! *(He puts his arm round her waist.)* Oh, sir, how you are pressing me! You always disremember that madam is my mistress. *(He kisses her.)*

*Chas.* That's for your mistress—that's for you. Vive la joie! Kiss me again, you Venus in a striped muslin!

*At this moment CAPTAIN MAGUIRE enters. Graham runs out.*

*Capt. M. "Halves," Charley.* Am I awake? Why, what a change has taken place. 'Pon my word, you're dressed within an inch of your life.

*Chas.* Not a word, my dear fellow. This is my shooting-dress—not bad, is it, Maguire? Curling-irons and cold cream, Stultz and style versus sermons and soda-water, long faces and short glasses.

*Capt. M.* But where am I? I received your note. With whom am I to dine?

*Chas.* With an angel—with the dearest, prettiest, wittiest, most fascinating widow in the world—a friend of mine, and of all pleasant, dashing fellows like me. The fact is, my dear boy, here I am at home. This is my preserve, where I take my day's shooting.

*Capt. M.* And your wife, and your mother-in-law—that paragon of perfection?

*Chas.* Hush! Shut sesame! Not a word. In this house I am a bachelor. I leave my wife and all my sorrows in Harley Street. The truth is, Maguire, since I married, I have been a miserable man—that is to say, when I am at home—I have no will of my own. The house is governed by that infernal Aminadab Sleek, and that tigress Lady Creamly. I behaved like an angel the first year—sighed and groaned early and late; escorted my mother-in-law regularly to Exeter Hall. But every concession made her more arrogant and more exacting. It was all in vain; so I determined to be happy in my own way. I take an occasional week's absence, under pretence of visiting our estates in Leicestershire, and when the shooting begins I am seldom to be found at home.

*Capt. M.* I perfectly understand you.

*Chas.* Then, Maguire, you know my mother-in-law and my wife have given up the world—the Parks, the Opera, and every place of fashionable resort, is deemed by them as abominations. I keep on my rooms at Mivart's. I indulge in the

society of a few valued friends, such as my charming widow, and, hitherto, I have escaped suspicion or detection.

*Capt. M.* But this charming widow?

*Chas.* You are sure to fall in love, old fellow. I have secured you a place by her side at dinner, and when the champagne works, I defy you to resist her fascinations.

*Capt. M.* Charles, you are an audacious and extraordinary fellow. Fortune favours the bold! But have a care! You are playing a dangerous game for your own peace of mind.

*Enter MRS. DELMAINE, not aware of the presence of the Captain.*

*Mrs. D.* My dear FitzFoley, what can keep you here? Wilson cannot get on without you.

*Chas.* I fly at your commands. But first let me present you one of my dearest friends—(pointing to the Captain, whose face is averted)—an unfortunate devil, who, between you and me, is suffering from a violent attack of heart-sickness, and who has come up to London to go through a course of pleasure, which the faculty have prescribed as a positive panacea for his peculiar disease. Captain Murphy Maguire—(Mrs. Delmaine starts)—Mrs. Ormsby Delmaine. (The Captain turns, recognises her, appears annoyed, but preserves his composure; Charles, not perceiving their embarrassment, continues.) There, good people, in this house there is no ceremony. As for me, I fly to see that the champagne be well iced, and full justice done to Mrs. Delmaine's preparations.

[Exit Charles.]

*Capt. M.* This is a mighty strange accident, madam, that has brought us again together. My friend has taken me quite by surprise. I must own, I was not entirely prepared for so unexpected a rencontre, with one by whom I have been so shamefully treated.

*Mrs. D.* No, Captain; 'twas I that was so shamefully treated.

*Capt. M.* Treated! Didn't you treat me with indifference?

*Mrs. D.* Didn't you harass me with suspicions?

*Capt. M.* Didn't you cause me to go to sea?

*Mrs. D.* Didn't you cause me to think of another?

*Capt. M.* And haven't I been trying to do the same to twenty others?

*Mrs. D.* Oh, there, there—we parted with a quarrel, and we meet again in the same pleasant manner. I must say you're a discontented—I was going to make use of a hard word, but I won't.

*Capt. M.* That's right—triumph in your victory. Your levity does not astonish me: You are the same gay, thoughtless, cold-hearted woman of the world as ever.

*Mrs. D.* And you are the same warm-hearted, hot-headed, well-meaning, but wrong-thinking man of the world as ever. And now let me ask you, for I know not what right you have to complain—

*Capt. M.* Ah, never mind the right, when I have the reason.

*Mrs. D.* And for what reason have you the right to any special consideration from me?

*Capt. M.* Would you have me put down all the items? Faith, a ream of foolscap wouldn't contain them! Mrs. Ormsby Delmaine, you are an ungrateful woman!

*Mrs. D.* And, Captain Murphy Maguire, you are

an ungrateful man! I confess that at one time I was silly enough to feel some esteem for the honesty of your character, and the independence of your mind; but I soon discovered you to be jealous, and so exacting that I dreaded to entrust my happiness to your hands.

*Capt. M.* Her waist is taper,  
None is completer;  
Like the tuneful nine, or the lambs at play;  
And her two eyes shining,  
Like rowling diamonds,  
And her breath as sweet as the flowers of May.

*Mrs. D.* But he was surly,  
And all hurly-burly,  
When there was no occasion for such display;  
The man to please me,  
Must never tease me,  
But be kind and mild as a fine and pleasant morning in the month of May.

*Mrs. D.* No, sir; yours is not the disposition to suit mine. Your friend, Mr. FitzFoley, indeed—

*Capt. M.* I entirely agree with you, that my friend, Mr. FitzFoley, has a million good qualities—indeed, I may say, first-class qualities; but you see Mother Nature has not cast us in the same elegant mould.

*Mrs. D.* Well, I'm glad to hear you acknowledge his good qualities, and your liberality is a credit to your taste and judgment, and I begin to think we may at last agree in our opinions. And now, to admit you into my confidence, allow me to confess, if ever I should marry again—mind, I only say "if"—I will say that Charles FitzFoley, from what I have seen of his temper, his manners, and his general character, is just the husband that would suit me.

*Capt. M.* (Bursting into a laugh.) What! Charles your husband? Oh! Upon my honour, that is something impossible—beyond all possibility!

*Mrs. D.* Really, sir, I do not comprehend the cause of your pleasantry. Mr. FitzFoley possesses all the qualities—

*Capt. M.* Which, of course, I do not possess. I give you much joy of your choice. But the bells will not ring in a hurry for that marriage, I promise you.

[Enter GRAHAM.]

*Gra.* I beg pardon, ma'am, there are two ladies who insist on seeing you. They have not come to dinner, but say they have something very particular to say to you.

[Exit Graham.]

*Capt. M.* Then, madam, with your permission, we will resume this interesting discussion after dinner. FitzFoley! The female deceiver! A day's shooting! Ha, ha!

[Exit Captain, R.]

*Enter LADY CREAMLY and MRS. TORRENS, L.*

*Lady C.* I hope, madam, you will excuse this intrusion, but I believe you are prepared for it by our circular.

*Mrs. D.* Oh, certainly, madam; and I feel much flattered by the permission you have accorded to me to contribute to so excellent a work. (Observes Mrs. Torrens.) Surely I am not mistaken! Is it my dear schoolfellow, Eve Creamly.



Mrs. T. Is it possible, my dear Harriet? I heard you were married, but we live so much out of the world that I really did not know to whom.

Lady C. So, you, madam, and my daughter are old friends. In that case I will take the liberty of leaving Eve with you for a few minutes, while I go to Lady Dismal, in the Square, who has promised me a liberal subscription, which Mr. Sless is in waiting to receive.

Mrs. D. Do, dear madam, I have a thousand things to say to Eve.

Lady C. I shall return very shortly.

[Exit Lady Creamly.]

Mrs. D. Well, dear Eve, I am delighted to see you! Tell me all about your dear self. Are you single or married, and if married, to whom?

Mrs. T. Oh, yes, I am married, and to a most worthy and amiable creature—a little too fond of the world at first, but now he listens, thank heaven, to reason. And you, my dear Harriet?

Mrs. D. I am a widow, child—that happy, independent being, a widow!

Mrs. T. Ah, Harriet, you were always too fond of the world!

Mrs. D. And you, Eve, always too demure. I remember, when we were schoolgirls, how you used to sit and mope over some dreary book, while the rest of us were romping, laughing, singing, and enjoying existence, like happy madcaps as we were.

Mrs. T. Ah, I recollect! (Sighing.)

Mrs. D. Don't look so solemn, dear. Miserable people may groan and talk of this "wicked world," but there are many warm and affectionate hearts in it for all that, and many things to love and worth loving, too; and there are beauties of hill, dale, river, and mountain, to which it would be ungrateful to close our eyes. If we have clouds have we not sunshines? Then are we always to be solemn and gloomy? No, my dear, there is more real virtue in kindness, cheerfulness, and goodness of heart than in all the cold and canting solemnity that was ever put on as a mask for selfishness. But to hear, dear Eve, that you are happy gives me unalloyed pleasure.

Mrs. T. Now, Harriet, tell me the truth. Have you any idea of exchanging your life of boasted liberty for the more reasonable one of wife.

Mrs. D. Why, my dear, if I must be candid, I think my boasted liberty is in jeopardy, as I am at this very moment, persecuted by two men. The one a noble-minded creature, full of heart and jealousy; the other a gay, joyous, rattling soul, sent into this world to torment and to tease me. But one of them, I candidly confess, I intend to have.

Enter CAPTAIN, &c.

Capt. M. Mrs. Delmaine, you are particularly wanted, and I apologize for the liberty of disturbing your tête-à-tête. (Sees Mrs. Torrens.) Oh, murder, Mrs. Torrens!

Mrs. T. Is it possible? Captain Murphy Maguire?

Mrs. D. Oh, good people, as I find you know each other I can have no difficulty in leaving you. Eve will do the honours for a few minutes for me.

[Exit Mrs. Delmaine.]

Capt. M. (Aside.) There'll be a conflagration! Pray, Mrs. Torrens, may I take the liberty to ask you if Mrs. Ormsby Delmaine knows your husband's name?

Mrs. T. I'm sure I don't know. I suppose so.

Capt. M. And may I take the liberty of inquiring what brought you here?

Mrs. T. I came with Lady Creamly.

Capt. M. And your husband?

Mrs. T. Oh, Mr. Torrens is in Leicestershire. He has gone down for a few days' shooting.

Capt. M. (Aside.) Oh, damp powder and spring guns! Are you quite sure of that? Now for a stroke of delicate diplomacy! To speak frankly with you, my dear Mrs. Torrens, would you think it possible that your husband has not gone down to Leicester for a few days' shooting; but, on the contrary, remains in town, to get rid of the domestic tyranny of his mother-in-law, Lady Sowerby Creamly?

Mrs. T. Charles not gone! Tyranny?

Capt. M. That's the true word. And be sure, Mrs. Torrens, all tyranny is the same. It makes people either hypocrites or liars, and, upon my faith, sometimes both.

Mrs. T. Sir, I fulfil all my duties.

Capt. M. Who doubts it, my dear lady? Not I, upon my faith. But there is something more than duty in this life; and a man's home must not be turned into a prison, nor every pleasantry be put down as a crime. Charles Torrens, before his marriage, was a decent-hearted, large-souled fellow, partaking handsomely of the pleasures of life, and never, I honestly believe, sulling his mind by its vulgar vices. He was a true gentleman. And what has he become under serious treatment? Why, one half the month a hypocritical Puritan, and what he is the other half I leave you, Mrs. Torrens, to find out.

Mrs. T. But I am not to blame. It is not my fault.

Capt. M. Yes, my dear Mrs. Torrens, and it is very much your fault. Oh, I can easily understand it! It's as plain as the Horse Guards. You are an excellent wife but a better daughter, and you sacrifice your husband to your mother. I am speaking, perhaps, too freely, but what I think I say. But surely it must have struck you that Charles will seek from home the pleasure he is denied at home.

Mrs. T. Oh, that's quite impossible! Mr. Torrens is incapable of wronging me in so base a manner.

(Torrens is heard singing gaily, Mrs.

Torrens starts, and the Captain turns aside to conceal his laughter.)

Chas. (Outside.) The coup d'œil is superb! Maguire, where are you? (Running in.) My angelic Mrs. Delmaine, come and see if the effect is not magnificent! (Seeing Mrs. Torrens.) My wife!

Mrs. T. Charles, in the name of common sense, what brings you here, and dressed, too, in this extraordinary manner?

Chas. My dear, I was just going to ask what brings you here?

Capt. M. Oh, Mrs. Torrens is come for an answer to the begging letter! I beg pardon, I mean the charity circular.

Chas. (Aside.) A capital thought! (Aloud.) And so have I, my love, I have come for Mrs. Delmaine's subscription.

Mrs. T. No, Charles; I am injured and deceived. Take me away! (Greatly agitated.) I stifle in this house!

(Crosses to B.)

Enter MRS. DELMAINE.

Mrs. D. What, going so soon, Mrs. Torrens?

Mrs. T. (Pointing to her husband.) That wicked man—

Mrs. D. Wicked man! Why, that is one of the gentlemen I spoke of; and I rather think he is the favourite.

Mrs. T. My husband; your favourite!

Mrs. D. Your husband! Oh! (Shrieks.)

Capt. M. (Aside, laughing.) Oh, it's beautiful!

Chas. (Asides.) I am in for it! This is a nice day's shooting!

Enter LADY CREAMLY and SLEEK, B.

Lady C. Come, Mrs. Torrens, we have many more calls to make. (Sees Torrens.)

Sleek. We shall be too late for the Timbuctoo Amelioration Meeting.

Lady C. In the name of all that is wonderful! Mr. Torrens—my son-in-law! Is it possible?

Sleek. Morally impossible, but ocularly a physical fact.

Lady C. Why, sir, we thought you were in Leicestershire.

Chas. Yes, Lady Creamly; but unexpected business brought me to town. (Aside.) Caught in the fact. (Aloud.) You perceive that—hem!—that—that—

Mrs. T. (Coming to his aid.) That Charles, seeing our carriage at the door, had the kindness to stop and offer you his arm.

(Charles offers his arm.)

Capt. M. She'll do! She's an angel—or, what's better, a true woman! She can tell a white one with the best of us.

Lady C. (Crosses to R. C.) All this must be explained. But, for the present, I consent to be satisfied.

Chas. (Asides.) Here's an end to my sporting excursions.

Sleek. Then the birds he sent us from Leicestershire were from a London poulterer. They'll lie heavy on my conscience.

Mrs. D. (Asides.) I want to know who is the dupe? I am determined to solve the riddle. (Aloud.) I thank you, ladies, for the honour you have conferred upon me, and I beg your acceptance of the widow's mite.

(Crosses to Lady Creamly, offering her subscription.)

Lady C. Many thanks, dear madam—(taking the money)—very many thanks. Come, my child, take your husband's arm.

Mrs. D. Perhaps good Mr. Sleek, in return, will cast his benevolent eyes over a little appeal that has been left here for my consideration.

(Giving a paper to Lady Creamly, who hands it to Sleek.)

Sleek. (Taking the paper, looking at it.) Oh, dear!

Lady C. What is it, Mr. Sleek.

Sleek. A petition from the parlour of a profane public-house, in behalf of the widow of a labourer, who lost his life last week by an accident, that has left his widow and six children destitute. Um! (Looking at Lady Creamly.) I don't think we can.

Lady C. I am afraid not.

Sleek. Believe me, my dear madam, we deeply sympathize with the case, but we are now making

a collection for the benighted Choktongs of Passamaquoddy, and haven't a farthing to spare.

(Returns the paper.)

Lady C. Adieu, my friends!

[Exit, R., Lady Creamly and Sleek, Torrens and Mrs. Torrens following. Captain Maguire and Mrs. Delmaine laughing, as the curtain falls.]

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE.—Drawing-room. Folding doors, C. Doors, R, and L.

Enter CAPTAIN MAGUIRE, B.

Capt. M. I've declared war; and here I am in the midst of the enemy's camp. Charles must be saved; Mrs. Torrens taught to know her own happiness; my young friend Emma rescued from the clutches of Aminadab Sleek; and Frank Vincent made one of the family. And here comes the darling little Emma.

Enter EMMA, L.

Well, darling, what has happened in my absence?

Emma. Oh, Captain Maguire, the house is in a state of mutiny and disorder! Mr. Sleek and Lady Creamly are furious at my brother; Mrs. Torrens is sobbing like a child; and as for me, I am very unhappy indeed; for I do not know what it is all about, or what is to become of me.

Capt. M. Ah, you shall be well taken care of!

Emma. I understand that Lady Creamly is determined to hurry on my match with that odious nephew of Mr. Sleek, and that we are all invited to dine to-day at his sister's, to settle the preliminaries.

Capt. M. Now stand at ease! Attention! I am going to play a bold game, Emma, and I want your assistance; but you must promise complete obedience. Are we agreed?

Emma. Oh, yes, Captain; I will do exactly what you tell me.

Capt. M. Well, then, first and foremost, we are going to give a ball here to-night.

Emma. A ball!

Capt. M. Call it a dance if you will—to some hundred or hundred and fifty particular acquaintances. So, go and look out your prettiest dress and make yourself as smart as possible, for probably you will have a partner to your own mind. Here comes the person I expected.

Enter FRANK VINCENT, R.

Frank. My dear Emma, how long it is since I have seen you.

Capt. M. Halt, there! There's no time at present for tender protestations.

Emma. Oh, dear! I'm quite alarmed! If Lady Creamly should come.

Frank. Who cares for Lady Creamly? I'm sure I don't.

Capt. M. Or old Sleek?

Emma. Who cares for Mr. Sleek? I am sure I don't.

Capt. M. (Listening at the wing.) To be sure, we all don't. Hush! Here they come—Mr. Sleek and Lady Creamly. (Emma screams and runs about the stage, Frank appears confused.) Sure, you are a pair of heroes! Come back, you little fluttering



love bird! Mr. Sleek and Lady Creamly are better engaged. Now, Frank, have you executed all my commissions?

Frank. Punctually, Captain. The invitations have been all sent. Gunter has provided a first-class feed, and Jullien's band is engaged. In the course of an hour everything will be ready.

Capt. M. And the note to Mrs. Ormsby Delmaine?

Frank. Here is her answer. I met Mr. Torrens in the square. He was furious that she was not at home.

(Gives note.)

Capt. M. (Opening the note.) The angelic widow is all right—she understands me. Now, Frank, see that everything is in readiness for ten o'clock precisely.

[Exit Frank, r.]

And as to you, Emma, you had better see after your toilette, as I see Mrs. Torrens coming, and I wish to have some serious confabulation with her.

[Exit Emma, l.]

Enter MRS. TORRENS, r.

Capt. M. I have waited to have the pleasure of seeing you, my dear Mrs. Torrens. Excuse my abruptness, but we must have a ball here to-night.

Mrs. T. A ball!

Capt. M. That's the second I've shot with the same ball.

Mrs. T. Impossible!

Enter SERVANT, and announces Mrs. Ormsby Delmaine.

Capt. M. And, à propos, she is the very first guest I have invited.

Enter MRS. DELMAINE, r.

Mrs. D. Well, here I am, Captain Maguire, an unexpected and probably an unwelcome visitor to Mrs. Charles Torrens. But when you tell me my presence is required to render an important service to my dear friend and schoolfellow, I cannot hesitate, even though I transgress a little the strict laws of etiquette.

Mrs. T. You are ever welcome to this house, madam, though I am bound to say that I cannot exactly understand in what way your services are required. Probably Captain Maguire, who undertakes the economy of my house, will be able to explain, or rather Mr. Charles Torrens, my husband, who according to your own admission, is received as a claimant for your hand.

Mrs. D. My dear Eve, lay aside for a moment your feelings as an offended woman and apparently injured wife. I am convinced that Mr. Torrens, though gay and thoughtless, loves you sincerely, and that you alone possess his heart.

Capt. M. What you say is quite true, Mrs. Delmaine; and it is for the purpose of convincing Mrs. Torrens that it depends entirely on her own conduct to secure her husband's love and society, that I have ventured to take the liberty I am now doing, and that I have summoned you to my aid.

Mrs. T. It would appear that I am to be placed on my trial. Well, I will submit with a good grace. So pray open the court and proceed to business.

Capt. M. Then, Mrs. Torrens, I charge you with

driving your husband from his natural home, and forcing him to seek those pleasures abroad which every man of the world expects to meet in his own house. Are you not aware of the temptations to which your husband has been exposed? Do you not see that he was forced to play a false part in Society, and even to declare himself a bachelor, for the purpose of securing a good reception?

Mrs. D. Yes, the wretch was so intensely agreeable, that even I, who am horribly difficult to please, had nearly fallen an unresisting victim, and, forgetting all the worth and honour that are combined in Captain Maguire's heart—(offering her hand to the Captain, who kisses it)—I had almost played him false and accepted your Mr. FitzFoley as a lover.

Capt. M. Now, Mrs. Torrens, the only way you can secure your husband's return to his duty is by emancipating yourself and him from the dominion of Mr. Aminadab Sleek, and, if I may be permitted to say so, of Lady Creamly.

Mrs. T. It is quite impossible, Captain Maguire, that I can forget the obligations which duty to my mother imposes on me.

Mrs. D. (Crosses to Mrs. Torrens.) In that case, my dear, you forget your duty to your husband; and though I would not have you neglect your filial considerations, it also teaches you that your duty to your husband is to love, honour, and obey him.

Mrs. T. There is no danger of that, for I find that Charles has returned to his usual routine, and he and Mr. Sleek are at this moment occupied in the great work.

Capt. M. I will easily convince you to the contrary. At what hour this morning did Charles go out, and where to?

Mrs. T. At twelve precisely, to meet Mr. Sleek.

Capt. M. At a quarter past twelve precisely he was in Belgrave Square, where he found the door of our dear friend, Mrs. Ormsby Delmaine, closed against him.

Mrs. D. Yes, my dear; your naughty husband would see me, but I was denied, and I am determined not to see him until he brings his charming wife to ask his pardon.

Capt. M. And where do you think he is going to-night?

Mrs. T. He dines with us at the sister of Mr. Sleek's, and will spend his evening in our usual serious and discreet manner.

Capt. M. Not a bit of it. He has accepted an invitation for dinner with the officers of the Guards, and he has asked me to present him in the evening at Lady Blank's, in Cavendish Square, with the hope of meeting our charming friend, whose pursuit he is not inclined to relinquish.

Mrs. T. What is to be done, and what do you require of me?

Mrs. D. The fact is, my dear Eve, Captain Maguire and I have arranged it all. In order to show Mr. Torrens that you are no longer at the mercy of Mr. Sleek and Lady Creamly, we have determined that you shall give a ball to-night. We have issued tickets to all your friends and I will present you to several of mine. The music and the refreshments are ordered, and you have nothing to do but make yourself look as handsome as possible, and surprise your husband with an unexpected pleasure. (Charles speaks outside.)

And, by the way, here he comes, just at the very fortunate moment when his presence is so desired.

(Maguire goes up, and comes down, r.)

Enter CHARLES, r., seeing Mrs. Delmaine has started, but quickly recovers himself.

Chas. Ah, Mrs. Delmaine, I am delighted to see you in this house, and I feel obliged by your early returning my wife's visit. (Crosses to Mrs. Torrens.) Bon jour, ma petite! (To Captain.) Ah, Maguire, how are you? It is an unlooked-for pleasure to find you here.

Capt. M. My dear fellow, I just called to know at what hour we are to go to Lady Blank's to-night.

Chas. (Aside to Captain.) Don't be absurd, my wife knows nothing of my engagement.

Capt. M. (Not heeding him.) There is to be an immense squeeze. The Duchess de B., and the Countess de F., and the Spanish beauty Donna Inez de Valencia, and valse, and polkas, and to crown the affair, Mrs. Ormsby Delmaine will, I have no doubt, have the felicity to meet you. (To Mrs. Delmaine.) If I mistake not, Mr. Torrens is engaged to you for the first polka.

Mrs. T. Sir, my husband does not polk.

(Crosses to r., goes up and down, r. c.)

Capt. M. (Aside.) Courage, Charley, now is the decisive moment!

Mrs. D. (Aside.) Fail now, and you are lost for ever.

Chas. (With affected courage.) Yes, my dear Mrs. Ormsby Delmaine, the first polka, the first valse, and a myriad of quadrilles.

Mrs. D. Oh, you unreasonable man!

Capt. M. (Aside to Mrs. Torrens.) You see, madam, the only chance of keeping your husband at home at night is to claim him as your partner for the first polka, the first valse, and a myriad of quadrilles.

Mrs. T. (Aside, hesitating.) Have it as you will. I agree to everything.

Capt. M. (To Charles.) Huza! We have reached the winning post—the day's our own!

Chas. (Dancing about the stage, and snapping his fingers in the air.) Bravo, bravo! That for old Aminadab Sleek and Lady Creamly!

In his transport he throws about the papers. At this moment LADY CREAMLY and MR. SLEEK enter, L., she with bonnet on, and he with hat and umbrella.

Lady C. In the name of goodness, what are you about?

Chas. Only putting the house in order.

Lady C. (Seeing Mrs. Delmaine and the Captain, bow very stiffly, and scarcely recognises them. They return her salute in the same manner.) I am going first to dinner, as I have one or two commissions by the way. You, Mr. Sleek, will follow us as soon as possible, and—(to Mrs. Torrens)—you, my dear, and Mr. Torrens will not delay. You know that our dear friend's hours are not those of fashionable life. (Crosses to r.)

Chas. Dear mamma, my head aches so severely it is impossible I can go out to-day.

Sleek. Why, Mr. Torrens, I never saw you looking better in my life.

Capt. M. You're quite mistaken in your prognosis. Charles's nerves are all shook to atoms.

Lady C. Well, then, daughter, you and Emma will come as soon as possible. I will send the carriage for you.

Mrs. T. Oh, dear mamma, my nerves are also much affected!

Mrs. D. Excuse me, Lady Creamly, but Mrs.

Charles Torrens must stay at home to take care of her husband. The duty of a wife is superior to all other considerations.

Mrs. T. Be so kind, Mr. Sleek, as to make my compliments and excuses to your sister! My husband's indisposition prevents me the pleasure of waiting on her as I intended. (Crosses to Charles.) Come, dear husband, we must see what can be done for you.

[Exit Charles and Mrs. Torrens, L.]

Lady C. (To Mrs. Delmaine.) I suspect this is all your doing, madam.

Mrs. D. (Affecting not to understand her.) I would be very happy, but really I'm engaged.

Sleek. (Going up to the Captain.) I much fear, Captain Murphy Maguire, you are meddling with matters you do not understand.

Capt. M. (Also affecting not to understand him.) I am really very sorry. It's quite out of my power to oblige you.

(Mr. Sleek and Lady Creamly look at each other with astonishment.)

Lady C. (Aside to Sleek.) There is something awful going on here, which I cannot understand. I will leave you to unravel the mystery if you can, and secure Emma, as I much fear my son-in-law has some designs on her independence.

[Exits, r., disdainfully, not noticing Mrs. Delmaine or the Captain.]

Capt. M. (Down, r.) Huza! The enemy has beat a retreat without beat of a drum or blast of trumpet. Now Mr. Aminadab Sleek, you are our prisoner—at any rate we are two to one against you. Do you surrender at discretion?

Mrs. D. Mr. Sleek, have you the discretion to surrender?

Capt. M. I want you to inveigle Lady Creamly.

Sleek. I never inveigled any female in my life.

Mrs. D. The greater the honour if you succeed with Lady Creamly. The truth is that between you both you have converted the house of Mr. Torrens into a state prison, and the Captain and I are determined to release him.

Capt. M. Now, sir, in double quick time, or in no time at all—are we to treat you as a friend or an enemy?

Sleek. It is quite indifferent how I am treated by you. My interests are not of this house, nor of this hemisphere.

Capt. M. Of course not; nor have you any personal interest, except the getting of Miss Torrens's fortune into your hands, by marrying her to your Straight-hair, your nephew.

Sleek. As a worm, I forgive you—as a man, I despise your hints and innuendoes.

Capt. M. Make up your pious mind that not a shilling of the young lady's property will pass your fingers. Her brother and guardian has already made choice of a husband—a decent young fellow, with a live heart in his bosom. And here comes Emma Torrens herself, who, if you should have any ugly doubts on the subject will clear them up, I dare answer.

Enter EMMA in a ball-dress, L.

Emma. Captain Maguire, is it not a love of a dress? Do I please you?

Sleek. Heaven preserve me, what do I see?

Mrs. D. You are charmingly dressed, and I suppose you are ready to accompany Mr. Aminadab Sleek, who is waiting to escort you to his sister.



Emma. I fear, Mr. Sleek, you will have to make my excuse, as I am engaged to a ball this evening.

Sleek. A ball! An abomination! Lady Creamly will put a stop to these wicked mummeries!

Enter FRANK VINCENT, R.

Frank. *(Running in.)* Captain Maguire, we are all ready. Gunter's people have come with a hamper of silver forks; there are mountains of cream, and whole lakes of Wenham ice; and Jullien, and Koenig, and the band are coming upstairs.

Sleek. What means this awful outbreak? The house will be defiled!

Capt. M. We are going to have a ball to-night, *(Sleek groans.)* You may stay and dance if you like. Mr. and Mrs. Torrens have resolved, as you will not let them go to the world, to make the world come to them.

Sleek. A ball here! Oh! *(Groans.)* I will go for Lady Creamly, and make you all repent this conduct.

Mrs. D. It will be time lost, Mr. Sleek! And I would recommend you to compound with your conscience, as you have often done before, and, as I have already advised, come over to our side.

Sleek. *(To Emma, bursting with rage.)* As for you—Miss—Miss—

Capt. M. Softly, Mr. Sleek, the British flag protects Miss Torrens.

Sleek. I see there is a conspiracy against us. I will speak to Mrs. Torrens.

Emma. No, Mr. Sleek; my sister is dressing for the ball, she must not be disturbed.

Sleek. *(Returns much mortified, and puts on his hat.)* I will go for Lady Creamly! *(His hat falls off, he picks it up and puts it on again.)* Yes, for Lady Creamly— *(Going, his hat falls off again.)* Returns—to Captain. I will make you responsible for everything.

*[His hat falls off a third time. As he is going out he picks it up, and exits foaming with rage. All laugh.]*

Capt. M. Huzza! The coast is clear. But I fear, for a short time only, as that old sinner will be sure to bring back Lady Creamly. So let us each to our respective posts to get the ball in train before her ladyship arrives. *(To Mrs. Delmaine.)* You and Emma will have the kindness to see the decorations are in order. You can accompany them, Frank, as their loyal esquire. The supper and wines I take under my especial charge. And now, England expects that every man—

Mrs. D. And woman—

Capt. M. And woman— Will do his duty!

*[Exeunt Captain, R.; Frank, Emma, and Mrs. Delmaine, c.]*

Enter CHARLES, full dressed, L.

Chas. No one in the way. I think I can get off to Lady Blank's without being perceived. That damned Maguire had nearly spoiled all my plans, but, fortunately, I escaped exactly in the nick of time.

Enter MRS. TORRENS, elegantly attired, L.

Good heavens! What do I see? Mrs. Torrens in full dress? Well, my dear, what extraordinary fancy has taken you to-night?

Mrs. T. I may ask the same question, Mr. Torrens; for I see by your costume, you are bent on conquest.

Chas. *(Tenderly.)* Eve, the only conquest I wish to make is here.

Mrs. T. Ah, Charles, you mock me!

Chas. *(Taking her hand.)* No, my dear. In truth, I never saw you looking so handsome. These jewels and this dress become you most admirably.

Mrs. T. If you are pleased, I am happy. But now, dear Charles, let us have a few moments' explanation, for, perhaps, on the experiment of this night all our future happiness depends.

Chas. Dearest Eve, I am all attention,

Mrs. T. Charles, you have not been sincere with me. You found me a young creature accustomed only to obey the voice of my mother, and ignorant that I had other duties but those she imposed on me to fulfil. You should have told me the little world in which I lived was not the world in which you, and other reasonable creatures in our sphere of life, existed. I now find that I have been wrong—very wrong indeed—and that if you have gone a little on your side astray the fault is all my own.

Chas. Ah, Eve, you are too kind, too amiable; the fault is all mine! I should have known better what a treasure I possessed.

Mrs. T. I am now determined, dearest Charles, to give you no excuse for seeking amusement abroad, by giving it you at home. We have, henceforth, but one mind, one heart; and in spite of all Mr. Sleek or Lady Creamly may say, we shall be as gay and happy—with prudence, and in season, of course—as other people of our rank and fortune.

Chas. You are an angel, Eve; and from this moment I swear eternal fidelity.

Enter CAPTAIN, R., MRS. DELMAINE,  
EMMA, c.

Welcome—a thousand times welcome! I am the happiest of men; and here is the most angelic creature in existence. Ask no explanations, but we are now the happiest couple in the world. Your hand, Maguire; it is to your spirit and courage I owe this moment of liberty. And to you, dear Mrs. Delmaine, I offer a true friend, in lieu of a false lover.

Enter FRANK, c.

Frank. "Sauve qui peut." Lady Creamly and old Sleek!

Capt. M. Stand firm, Charley!

Mrs. D. Courage, dearest madam!

Emma. Oh, we're lost—we're lost!

Enter LADY CREAMLY, followed by SLEEK. She throws herself in a posture of violent anger. Sleek stands behind her, hypocritically raising his hands. She does not perceive either of the three ladies, the three gentlemen standing before them.

Lady C. *(Violently.)* What's this I see? What's this I hear? Who has dared to turn this house into a house of sin and iniquity?

Sleek. An abode of Agapemenons!

Capt. M. Why, my lady, I am afraid the blame must rest with me.

Lady C. *(Haughtily.)* I spoke not to you, sir. Where is my daughter?

*Sleek.* Where is her sole offspring?

(*The Captain, who has been standing before Mrs. Torrens, moves aside and discovers her.*)

*Lady C.* (Screams with horror.) Oh, what do I see? Witchcraft! Silk, satins, flowers, and jewels! Are we in Bedlam?

*Mrs. T.* Why, dear mamma, it is only a bell.

*Lady C.* A ball! Are you mad, child?

*Sleek.* You can't dance without a license. Call in the police. Even Government cannot defer that tax on hops.

*Lady C.* (To *Charles*.) Explain this, Mr. Charles Torrens.

*Capt. M.* (Aside.) Stand firm or you're lost!  
(*Charles hesitatingly steps aside and discovers Emma.*)

*Emma.* (Advancing.) It is only a nice little ball, Lady Creamly.

*Sleek.* Child of polkomania! Cellarius infant!

*Mrs. T.* It's only a ball, mamma, I give in honour of my husband's birthday.

*Chas.* Yes, dear mamma, a little dance in honour of my birthday.

*Frank.* (Coming forward, discovers *Mrs. Delmaine*.) Merely a valse and a polka.

*Sleek.* And that widow of profane Ephesus.

*Mrs. D.* Yes, Mr. Amiadab Sleek, for once in my life I am tempted to join the solemn circle of a serious family, but only in the hope of bringing cheerfulness and geniality, where hitherto have been groans and sighs and straight-laced formality.

*Chas.* To speak plainly, Lady Creamly, this is my house, and for the future I am determined to be master in it. I will have no longer Puritanical faces and starched behaviour about me. I'll see happy countenances, smiles and cheerfulness.

*Sleek.* Then look at us.

*Mrs. T.* (Crosses to *Lady Creamly*.) Yes, mamma, we love you very dearly; but Charles and I are commencing a new system.

*Lady C.* What do I hear? Support me, Mr. Sleek.

*Sleek.* Morally I would, but physically I can't.

*Lady C.* Must I renounce you for ever? Daughter, I command you to follow me!

*Mrs. T.* Dear mamma, one's first duty is to obey one's husband, and Charles has ordered me to stay.

*Lady C.* (To *Emma*.) As for Miss Insolence—come hither!

*Emma.* Pardon me, Lady Creamly, Charles is my guardian, and has ordered me to stay.

*Lady C.* (To *Mrs. Delmaine*.) And you, madam, will instantly leave the house.

*Mrs. D.* Pardon me, Lady Creamly, this gentleman, my intended husband, has ordered me to stay.

*Capt. M.* (R.) And the three pair of us will make a mighty pretty couple.

*Lady C.* Why, this is rebellion.

*Chas.* No, mamma, only a revolution.

*Sleek.* Insurrection, if it doesn't succeed.

*Chas.* (The first bar of a polka is heard.) Ah, there's the polka! Partners and places.

*Lady C.* Vice and vanity! Ungrateful children, I banish you for ever! Come, Mr. Sleek.

*Sleek.* Your wicked saltations won't last. No; though it's a long time, there's a good time coming.

[*Sleek gives his hand, and they walk off majestically. The doors at the back of the stage are thrown open, and disclose a ballroom, richly ornamented and lighted up. The orchestra play polka pianissimo. Captain gives his arm to the widow; Frank Vincent to Emma; and Charles to Mrs. Torrens. Guests dancing.*]

*Chas.* (Rubbing his hands.) This is a capital day's shooting.

(*The following lines are spoken to the polka air while dancing.*)

*Chas.* Isn't this joy, my darling Eve?

*Mrs. T.* Joy with you the dance to weave.

*Frank.* Oh, may I really call you mine?

*Emma.* Partner for life, dear Frank, I'm thine!

*Capt. M.* I'll be the model for husband's lives.

*Mrs. D.* I'll be the pattern of faithful wives.

*Capt. M.* Charles, isn't this a heavenly scene?

*Mrs. D.* And angels we—that's what you mean?

*Mrs. T.* Gaily my husband's hours shall fly,

I vow it.

*Emma.* And I!

*Mrs. D.* And I!

*Capt. M.* And I!

*Chas.* Then, if we've pleased our generous friends,

Gaily "The Serious Family" ends.

CURTAIN.

*Disposition of the Characters at the Fall of the Curtain.*

MRS. D.

MAGUIRE.

MRS. T.

CHARLES.

EMMA.

FRANK.

B.



PR Barnett, Morris  
4066 The serious family  
B34S4 Original complete ed.  
1880

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE  
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

---

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY

---

